

PROLINNOVA SOUTH AFRICA – COUNTRY REPORT 2004

1. Process description

1.1 Programme management

PROLINNOVA South Africa is currently managed as follows:

- Country coordinator: Monique Salomon, Director of Farmer Support Group
- Secretariat: Rauri Alcock, chairperson, and Margaretha Wielsma, administrator of MIDNET, a South African network for NGO's in sustainable agriculture and rural development
- Core team:
 - i. Roberta Burgess, Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, Agricultural Research Council Infruitec-Nietvoorbij,
 - ii. Tim Hart, Integrated Rural and Regional Development Research Programme, Human Sciences Research Council
 - iii. Ernest Letsoalo, coordinator of the Centre for Rural Community Empowerment, University of Limpopo
 - iv. Munyaradzi Saruchera, Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape
- Trainers:
 - i. Hannes de Villiers, Director of Farming Systems Unit, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs
 - ii. Vusumuzi Sithole, Farmer Support Group

1.2 Programme activities

Monique Salomon and Tim Hart attended the International PROLINNOVA workshop in Yirgalem, Ethiopia from 8-12 March 2004. The workshop brought together Country Programmes, international support group and representatives from international development organizations, funding agencies and relevant and networks. Participants shared experiences, presented case studies and work plans, and developed a common vision and action plan to promote PROLINNOVA both internationally and locally. The South African delegation met a fellow South African, Ernest Letsoalo, representing GRET who agreed to join the Core Team.

In our work plan we had envisaged to establish a "Think Tank". In the course of the year, however, we articulated roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat and the Core Team. To mobilize capacity and logistical support to launch the programme in South Africa, it was agreed that MIDNET (Natal Midlands NGO Network) would take on the Secretariat function. In this capacity they handled programme administration, and workshop logistics. The country coordinator held regular meetings with the administrator and chairperson of MIDNET, and from June 2004 also with the trainers to brainstorm ideas and set up programme activities. The role of the Core Team is to promote the programme and monitor its strategic direction.

PROLINNOVA

PROMOTING LOCAL INNOVATION IN ECOLOGICALLY-ORIENTED AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In comparison to other country programmes, the costs of operating in South Africa are higher. The PROLINNOVA Secretariat allocated a larger amount to our Country Programme. However, this budget still constrained activities in the inception phase. The Core Team decided to launch pilot activities in one Province, namely KwaZulu-Natal where the host organization and secretariat are based.

Two participants, Vusumuzi Sithole and Hannes de Villiers were recruited from respectively the Farmer Support Group (host NGO) and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs to attend the Training of Trainers workshop in the Philippines in June 2004.

Upon return to South Africa, these newly trained trainers, together with the Country Coordinator and Secretariat co-facilitated a feedback workshop for stakeholders in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal on 6 July 2004. Twenty participants from NGO's, Department of Agriculture, and government research, mainly operating in the province of KwaZulu-Natal attended the workshop. They were asked to identify candidates for a capacity building programme in Participatory Innovation Development (PID).

From 14-16 September 2004, a three day training in Participatory Innovation Development was held in Pietermaritzburg. Twenty-five representatives attended from NGO's, Provincial Departments of Agriculture, government research and parastatals. Two-third of participants are working in KwaZulu-Natal, and one-third in other Provinces such as Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Limpopo and at national level.

Participants developed a format to identify and document farmer innovations. They were then tasked to identify and track farmer innovations in the communities they were working in, during the period between September and November 2004.

Results from these studies were presented and discussed at a follow up workshop held from 10-11 November held in Pietermaritzburg. At this workshop, participants reflected on their field experiences, and identified issues to be addressed by the programme in the following years. All participants from the previous training (except one) were able to attend this two-day session. Four new participants joined.

A Core Team meeting was held afterwards on 12 November 2004, to review progress made, develop a draft work plan for 2005, and make preparations for a two-day National Stakeholder Workshop scheduled for 16-17 February 2005.

2. Overall achievements

2.1 Analysis and Evaluation

What worked well

The trainers enjoyed the international exposure and networking at the Training of Trainers Programme in the Philippines. It also enabled them to get a better understanding of the vision and mission of PROLINNOVA International.

The trainers, in consultation with the Secretariat, and with guidance and input from the Country coordinator, designed and implemented an interesting training programme in September 2004. The programme allowed participants to share and reflect on their experiences with local farmer innovation, and resulted in a comprehensive format to identify and document local innovations.

A total of sixteen innovations were presented and discussed during the follow up workshop in November 2004. These will be used as examples in a discussion document for the National Stakeholder Workshop in February 2005.

The Country coordinator, Secretariat and trainers worked well together in launching the programme, and implementing the inception phase.

What did not work so well

The Training of Trainers in the Philippines was somewhat disappointing because it didn't result in a training curriculum. The trainers had to develop this from scratch upon their return and relied a lot on the input from the Country coordinator.

The Country coordinator, Monique Salomon who is the director of a NGO, had too many other obligations preventing her from maintaining focus, ensuring optimum communication, and bringing effective leadership and vision to the Country programme. The support of the Secretariat helped to improve communication with stakeholders and organizing workshop logistics. However, besides administrative support, the programme was short of an additional staff member who could manage content.

The input of most members of the Core Team was minimal during the inception phase. Only one member (Tim Hart, initially with the ARC, but then moved to the HSRC) was proactive in helping to shape the programme, and maintain communication with the international PROLINNOVA network. The team as a whole only started playing a prominent role during and after the session in November.

Some participants struggled to get support and permission from their managers to engage fully in fieldwork. They requested that the PROLINNOVA SA Core Team give a presentation to their managers to get their support.

2.2 Recommendations for next year (2005-2006)

The Core Team will play a more prominent role in giving strategic direction to the programme, and lobbying and advocacy. Terms of reference will need to be developed for the members, and a 'lobbying tour' undertaken to get buy-in from top officials from the various participating and prospective organisations.

The budget needs to include the appointment of a full-time coordinator who can manage the programme on the ground, maintain communication and promote the programme among stakeholders.

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The following areas of focus were identified for next year:

1. Communication, networking and awareness raising with existing participants as well as with newly identified organisations
2. Engaging researchers and farmers to:
 - a. Document innovation examples
 - b. Research innovation processes through pictures/videos
 - c. Develop successful partnerships between researchers and farmers
3. Working conference
4. Advocacy & lobbying
5. Work on a publication of SA local innovations?
6. Capacity building in supporting and promoting local farmer innovation